United Nations

A/C.1/53/PV.25

General Assembly

Fifty-third session

Official Records

First Committee

25th Meeting

Friday, 6 November 1998, 10 a.m.

New York

Chairman: Mr. Mernier . . . . . (Belgium)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda items 63 to 80 (*continued*)

Action on all draft resolutions submitted under all items

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): The secretariat has today circulated a third informal paper containing the list of draft resolutions on which action will be taken today.

Five draft resolutions are ready to be acted upon. Given that the most controversial draft resolutions have not yet been voted upon, I appeal to all delegations to give positive consideration to the postponements requested. We hope that draft resolutions that do not pose major difficulties can be acted upon as soon as possible — perhaps even on Monday afternoon. That would ensure sufficient time for action on the difficult draft resolutions to take place towards the end of the week. I remind the Committee that next week is our last week of work, and only five meetings are scheduled.

Once again, I appeal to all delegations to ensure that requests for postponements are well founded. Please bring to my attention as early as possible those draft resolutions for which postponements had been requested but on which members are now ready to take action.

We first turn to cluster 1, nuclear weapons.

(*spoke in English*)

As no delegations wish to make general statements on that cluster, we will now consider draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.2, "Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia".

The sponsors of the draft resolution have expressed the wish that the Committee adopt it without a vote. As there is no objection to that procedure, I call on the Secretary of the Committee.

Mr. Lin Kuo-Chung (Secretary of the Committee): Draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.2, entitled "Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia", was introduced by the representative of Kyrgyzstan at the 18th meeting on 29 October 1998. In addition to the sponsors listed in the draft resolution, additional sponsors are listed in document A/C.1/53/INF/2 and Add.1.

In connection with this draft resolution, I should like to make the following statement on behalf of the Secretary-General:

> "By operative paragraph 4 of draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.2 the General Assembly would request 'the Secretary-General, within existing resources, to provide assistance to the Central Asian States in the preparation of the form and elements of an agreement on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia', and by operative paragraph 5 it would decide 'to consider the question of the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia at its fifty-fourth session under the agenda item entitled "General and complete disarmament"'.

98-86326 (E)

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"It is envisaged that, in response to the resolution, two expert group meetings will be held, one in April 1999 in New York and the other in July 1999 in Geneva. The conference-servicing requirements would be for two meetings per day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, for five days, for each. On the basis of similar meetings held in 1998, it is expected that interpretation would be required in English and Russian only. It is also anticipated that 20 pages of in-session and 10 pages of post-session documentation would be required in English and Russian, for each meeting.

"The conference-servicing requirements of the meetings are estimated at $28,200 for the meeting at New York and $23,600 for the meeting at Geneva, at full cost. Provision is made under Section 1B, General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, of the programme budget for the biennium 1998-99 not only for meetings programmed at the time of the budget preparation but also for meetings authorized subsequently, provided that the number and distribution of meetings are consistent with the pattern of meetings of past years. The extent to which the Organization's capacity would need to be supplemented by temporary assistance resources can be determined only in the light of the calendar of conferences and meetings for the biennium 1998-99. Consequently, should the General Assembly adopt the draft resolution, no additional appropriation would be required, at this time."

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): As no delegation wishes to explain its position before a decision is taken on the draft resolution, may I take it that the draft resolution is adopted?

Draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.2 was adopted.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): Does any delegation wish to explain its position after the adoption of the draft resolution?

Mrs. Kunadi (India): It is noteworthy that the proposal for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia is supported by all the States of the region and thus is in conformity with the requirement of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned.

We are particularly pleased that the efforts of the Central Asian States, with which India enjoys historically close and friendly ties, is receiving the international support that this initiative deserves.

We, on our part, fully respect the choice made by the Central Asian States and are prepared to extend all possible support and commitments in response to an expressed need for the early realization of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): As no other delegations wish to explain their position on the draft resolution just adopted, the Committee will now take a decision on draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.36,

(*spoke in English*)

"Conclusion of effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons".

A recorded vote has been requested.

I call on the Secretary of the Committee to conduct the voting.

Mr. Lin Kuo-Chung (Secretary of the Committee): Draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.36, "Conclusion of effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use of threat of use of nuclear weapons", was introduced by the representative of Pakistan at the 17th meeting on 28 October 1998. In addition to the sponsors listed in the draft resolution, additional sponsors are listed in document A/C.1/53/INF/2.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Bhutan, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Georgia, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jamaica, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritania, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone,

Singapore, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Togo, Ukraine, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia

Against:

None

Abstaining:

Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Benin, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

Draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.36 was adopted by 78 votes to none, with 48 abstentions.

[Subsequently the delegation of Ghana informed the Secretariat that it had intended to vote in favour.]

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I now call on those delegations wishing to explain their vote.

Mr. Campbell (Australia): Australia considers that, pending the elimination of nuclear weapons consistent with article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), negative security assurances are an essential reinforcing element underpinning the international non-proliferation and disarmament regime. Australia considers that those countries that are non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT which have renounced the nuclear weapons option and which are in full compliance with their NPT obligations have a legitimate claim to credible, comprehensive and effective negative security assurances from the five nuclear-weapon States.

Negative security assurances are also an important inducement for the few States still outside the NPT to accede to it. The failure of draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.36 to give due primacy to the particular claims and interests of States parties to the NPT in this regard, regrettably, prevents Australia from supporting the text. In addition, Australia regards as extremely dubious the standing with respect to negative security assurances of any State party to the NPT which may be seeking to acquire nuclear weapons.

Mrs. Kunadi (India): I wish to explain our vote on draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.36.

India has consistently maintained that the only credible guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons lies in their total elimination. Until that objective is achieved, as an interim measure, there exists an obligation on the part of the States possessing nuclear weapons to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. That obligation should be of an internationally legally binding character: clear, credible, universal and without discrimination. We welcomed the resumption of work in 1998 through an Ad Hoc Committee in the Conference on Disarmament. Based on that approach, we voted in favour of the draft resolution.

For its part, and conscious of its responsibilities as a nuclear-weapon State, India has stated that it will not be the first to use nuclear weapons and that it remains willing to strengthen that undertaking by entering into bilateral agreements on no first use or into multilateral negotiations on global no first use. It having been stated that we shall not be the first to use nuclear weapons, there remains no basis for their use against countries that do not have nuclear weapons. In this manner India is providing a unilateral negative security assurance to all non-nuclear-weapon States. India respects the choice exercised by non-nuclear-weapon States in establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at amongst the States of the region concerned, and stands prepared to convert this commitment into a legal obligation.

Mr. Goosen (South Africa): South Africa is a strong supporter of granting legally binding negative security assurances to the non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), as is demonstrated by our actions and by the proposals which South Africa has submitted in the context of the review and extension process of the NPT. We believe that negative security assurances are an integral element of the NPT bargain by which the non-nuclear-weapon States have undertaken a legal commitment not to aspi.e to these weapons.

The Conference on Disarmament, in Geneva, has continuously demonstrated its inability to deal with this issue effectively, and it is South Africa's belief that the best

place for taking up the matter of negative security assurances is within the context of the NPT.

Draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.36 did not take into account these views, and for that reason South Africa abstained in the vote on that text.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): We shall turn now to the draft resolutions in cluster 4, on conventional weapons. I call first on representatives wishing to make general statements on these draft resolutions.

Ms. Cheng (Singapore): Singapore is committed to the efforts of the international community to combat the problem of illicit trafficking in and the illicit circulation of small arms. Such illicit transfers pose a real danger to regional and international security. That is why we support draft resolutions A/C.1/53/L.7/Rev.1, submitted by Mali, A/C.1/53/L.13/Rev.1, submitted by Japan, and A/C.1/53/L.41/Rev.1, submitted by South Africa, on this issue. These draft resolutions are rightly focused on curbing illicit transfers of such weapons.

For its part, Singapore has strict controls over the import and export of small arms and light weapons. Also, our laws on the unlawful possession of small arms and on the illegal use of such weapons are strictly enforced.

While illicit transfers of small arms should be curbed, illicit trafficking must be clearly distinguished from the production, accumulation and transfer of small arms for the legitimate right of national defence. No measure aimed at curbing the illicit transfer of small arms should impair the right of States to self-defence in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter, which would be meaningless if States did not have the right to acquire arms with which to defend themselves.

We also support increased consultation, coordination and cooperation amongst Member States to combat illicit trafficking in small arms, and stress the central role of the Department for Disarmament Affairs in this matter. However, not all States, particularly small States, have the manpower or resources to participate in these consultations as fully as they would like. Inability to participate does not indicate a lack of interest. It is therefore crucial that the consultation process should be a transparent and inclusive one, involving all Member States. The issue at hand is complex and difficult; it cannot be solved simply by a handful of countries.

Mr. Amehou (Benin) (*interpretation from French*): In many regions, illicit trafficking in small arms has become a major concern. The uncontrolled proliferation of light weapons now poses a grave threat to the security of many countries, especially African countries. That proliferation of small arms and light weapons is a cause of the loss of life and the material damage that now plague many countries of West Africa. In some countries of that subregion, wars have sharply increased the illicit circulation of these weapons, which are used in the commission of murderous robberies and other terrible crimes once unknown in the subregion.

The existence of these weapons has exacerbated conflicts that in other circumstances would have been settled peacefully. In some parts of the West African subregion, the civilian population — wishing only to go about its daily business — is held hostage by armed bands possessing effective means of communication which are sometimes more sophisticated than those available to official security forces. Hence, there is grave danger inherent in the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons in the West African subregion.

Therefore, aware of the risk of general destabilization of the subregion, the heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have placed a moratorium on the import, export and production of light weapons, small arms and certain other conventional weapons. These praiseworthy efforts deserve the support of the international community so that they may have tangible and satisfactory results. Indeed, sustained assistance from the international community in the demobilization of former combatants, and above all their reintegration into society, is needed, and this assistance should include, in the subregion, collecting and even repurchasing arms from former combatants with a view to their effective destruction. Training and equipping national security forces should also be part of this assistance.

All these efforts of the international community will be in vain without reform of military-industrial complexes, vestiges of the cold war that continue to flood the countries of the third world, particularly in Africa, with small arms. The international community will have to define a reliable mechanism to ensure effective control, from the producer to the end-user of these weapons.

In this connection, my delegation supports all draft resolutions aimed at reducing and eliminating these weapons in our countries.

Mr. Al-Hassan (Oman) (*interpretation from Arabic*): My statement on behalf of my country, the Sultanate of Oman, is in the framework of the general statements on draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.13/Rev.1, concerning small arms, under cluster 4 on conventional weapons.

My delegation has in the past abstained from voting on this draft resolution put forward by Japan. The reasons for that are as follows. First, while the draft resolution touches on issues important to the international community as well as to developing and developed countries, it lacks unity and focus, as it touches upon several issues such as small arms, ammunition, explosives and the domestic jurisdiction of States. My country believes that the primary responsibility for dealing with issues such as illegal trafficking in small arms lies primarily with the national authorities of every State, whether an importer or exporter.

The second reason which leads us to believe that the draft resolution lacks objectivity is the fact that it promotes the idea of holding an international conference on the subject. Despite the fact that my delegation supports this noble and lofty idea, which expresses a laudable concept, we believe that it should take into account the ideas and positions of all States and not just the recommendations and ideas that have been put forward by a limited group of selected experts.

Because of our belief in the noble purpose of draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.13/Rev.1, my delegation will vote in favour of it. However, we believe that the States that prepared it should move in a general direction that aims at taking into account all the ideas of all States and ascertaining their positions.

The international conference should be well prepared, but no specific dates should be set for it to complete its work, which we believe should be done within the framework of the stages of a recognized process. Therefore, as I have stated, my delegation will support all the draft resolutions to be introduced on small arms.

Mr. Rowe (Sierra Leone): The importance which the Sierra Leone delegation attaches to the problem of small arms and the urgent need to curb the illicit traffic in those weapons was clearly demonstrated two months ago when the President of Sierra Leone himself signed the Ottawa Convention here in New York. We expect to continue our commitment to the cause and the issue of small arms, and we will take up the ratification process in our Parliament as soon as possible, hopefully before the Convention goes into effect early next year.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I call on the representative of Mali to introduce a revised draft resolution.

Mr. Sylla (Mali) (*interpretation from French*): I would like to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.7/Rev.1, which will soon be in its second revision, as document A/C.1/53.L.7/Rev.2, when the typographical errors have been corrected, and with the replacement in the thirteenth preambular paragraph of

(*spoke in English*)

"the Oslo Platform and the Brussels Appeal" by "the Oslo common understanding and the Brussels call for action".

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I hope that all delegations have taken note of those minor changes. In order to give them time to consider them, we shall deal with draft resolution A/C.1/L.7/Rev.2 at the end of the morning, and we shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.13/Rev.1, entitled

(*spoke in English*)

"Small arms".

A separate, recorded vote has been requested on the fourth preambular paragraph, which reads:

> "*Reaffirming also* the right of self-determination of all peoples, in particular peoples under colonial or other forms of alien domination or foreign occupation, and the importance of the effective realization of this right, as enunciated, *inter alia*, in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights on 25 June 1993, A/CONF.157/24 (Part I), Chap. III".

I call first on those delegations wishing to explain their position before we take action on that paragraph.

Mrs. Burgois (France) (*interpretation from French*): Today we are to take a decision on draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.13/Rev.1. I would like to take this opportunity to give France's position regarding this text and light weapons and small arms in general.

As others before me have said, this question transcends the field of disarmament. It also concerns the reinforcement of peace and security, in which, along with

development, the fight against illicit trafficking is a major aspect.

France notes with satisfaction that, as the words heard during the debate on this item in the First Committee bear witness, the international community as a whole has decided to tackle the dangers caused by the excessive accumulation of light weapons and small arms and their dissemination. The international community's commitment is of course reflected in many initiatives, which have already enabled us to make progress in dealing with this plague.

At the regional level, I will confine myself to referring to the West African moratorium on the import, export and production of small arms, recently adopted by the Economic Community of West African States on the initiative of Mali. This is a promising step. Similarly, the entry into force of the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials is a broader response on the scale of a vast region. France fully supports these regional initiatives, which make it possible to better analyse the difficulties encountered, to adopt pragmatic measures within a specific context and to achieve concrete results.

At the global level, the work done under the aegis of the United Nations should lead to a better analysis of the various aspects of the problem and to the adoption of a proportional, integral approach, such as has been outlined by the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms. In the context of this global approach, France is vigorously supporting the work on drawing up a convention to combat transnational organized crime, a protocol of which will deal with firearms. My country is already playing an active role in the international community's activities in this area.

Within the United Nations France is taking part in the Group of Experts established in accordance with resolution 52/38 J. In addition, at the Birmingham G-8 summit, it and the other G-8 members adopted a set of principles and a plan of action to coordinate their approaches to dealing with the problems posed by the manufacture of and illicit trafficking in firearms. Along with its European Union partners, on 26 July 1997 France adopted a programme of action for preventing and combating illicit trafficking in conventional arms. The methods for the implementation of this programme also pertain to light weapons and small arms.

Given such a commitment, France of course supports the draft resolutions presented on this item in the First Committee. It has co-sponsored A/C.1/53/L.41/Rev.1, on the illicit traffic in light weapons and small arms", and it joined in the consensus on A/C.1/53/L.7, regarding assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and collecting them. It has also co-sponsored the German draft resolution (A/C.1/L.31/Rev.1) regarding the consolidation of peace through specific disarmament measures.

This commitment naturally called for France to co-sponsor draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.13/Rev.1, submitted by Japan. France supports the convening of an international conference on the illicit trade in light weapons and small arms in all its aspects not later than 2001. It welcomes in this regard the offer of the Swiss Government to host this conference in Geneva. Unfortunately, the inclusion of elements that have nothing to do with the draft resolution's objective prevent France from co-sponsoring it, which we most earnestly regret.

France is, of course, in favour of the right to self-determination of peoples. Having said that, we believe that the paragraph on this subject has no place in this draft resolution, which should be focused on the very important issue of dealing with the problems raised by light weapons and small arms. Furthermore, we believe that, in the context of this draft resolution, the paragraph could be used to justify reprehensible activities. I am thinking in particular of illicit trafficking and terrorist activities that interfere with the peaceful resolution of crises or situations of tension.

For these reasons, France will abstain on this paragraph, while voting in favour of the draft resolution as a whole. We hope that in the future the authors will be able to delete what we believe is perhaps the final obstacle to the draft resolution's adoption by consensus.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): Pakistan favours the international community's efforts to control the illicit flow of small arms and their utilization in various conflicts, which cause great human suffering in so many places. We are therefore favourably inclined towards the proposed decision in the draft resolution to convene an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects.

Pakistan was instrumental in securing the insertion in the original draft resolution on this subject of two vital principles of the United Nations Charter.

The first principle is that of individual or collective self-defence. We believe that the transfer of arms for the purposes of individual or collective self-defence of nations and States is not illicit and is a right inherent in the United Nations Charter. It is important to reaffirm this principle in the context of this draft resolution.

Equally important is the principle of the right of peoples to self-determination — peoples under foreign and colonial occupation. If it had been a rule of international law that peoples who are being denied their right of self-determination and who are under foreign or colonial occupation should not receive the means to defend themselves and seek their liberty, we would not have so many nations seated here. Many of us are the product of the exercise of the right of self-determination, at times through using violent means to defend ourselves against colonial and foreign oppression.

We therefore cannot understand why any countries or any States should be opposed to the reference in the draft resolution before us to this fundamental principle of the United Nations Charter. We can only presume that they have particular concerns which are not being expressed openly on the floor of this Committee.

We would urge an affirmative vote on the paragraph regarding self-determination. It is central to the whole concept of nation-States and international relations.

Mr. Becher (Israel): My delegation will vote in favour of the draft resolution contained in A/C.1./53/L.13/Rev.1, but will abstain on the fourth preambular paragraph. My delegation disagrees with the introduction of the fourth preambular paragraph within the context of this specific draft resolution on small arms. Israel expresses its views on the issue of self-determination in the discussions of the Third Committee.

The Chairman: Does any other delegation wish to explain its position before we take action on the fourth preambular paragraph of draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.13/Rev.1?

I see none, so I call on the Secretary of the Committee to conduct the voting.

Mr. Lin Kuo-Chung (Secretary of the Committee): Draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.13/Rev.1, entitled "Small arms", was introduced by the representative of Japan at the 17th meeting on 28 October 1998. Sponsors additional to those listed in the draft resolution are listed in document A/C.1/53/INF.2 and Add.1 and Add.2.

The following countries have also become sponsors of the draft resolution: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia and Cameroon.

The Committee will now proceed to vote on the fourth preambular paragraph of draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.13/Rev.1.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guyana, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

None

Abstaining:

Azerbaijan, France, Georgia, India, Israel, Monaco, Romania, Russian Federation, Spain, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

The fourth preambular paragraph of draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.13/Rev.1 was retained by 127 votes to none, with 11 abstentions.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): Does any delegation wish to explain its vote after the vote?

I see none.

The Committee will now take a decision on draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.13/Rev.1, entitled "Small arms", as a whole.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guyana, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, San Marino, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America, Uruguay, Venezuela, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

None

Abstaining:

Bahrain, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia

Draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.13/Rev.1, as a whole, was adopted by 136 votes to none, with 3 abstentions.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I shall now call on those delegations wishing to explain their vote.

Mr. Abdullayev (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): The Russian delegation believes that the draft resolution is timely and very useful. To the extent that it affects the Russian Federation, we will take the important steps and measures provided for in it.

However, we could not support the draft resolution — for one simple reason: its fourth preambular paragraph in our view not only is inappropriate but also weakens and distorts the draft resolution. We were therefore obliged to abstain in the separate vote on the fourth preambular paragraph and in the vote on the draft resolution as a whole.

Mr. Kongstad (Norway): Norway voted in support of this draft resolution because we share the view that there is a need for a comprehensive approach to promote the control and reduction of small arms and light weapons. We also agree that an international conference might contribute to this end, and we therefore, in principle, support the holding of such a conference on small arms.

However, we believe that it is necessary to agree on the objectives and exact scope before any decision is made regarding a date and a venue for an international conference. Governments must bear the primary responsibility for addressing these issues and we note with interest and appreciation the many government initiatives to control the excessive accumulation and uncontrolled use of small arms.

Complementarity must be ensured between the proposed international conference and other relevant work already in progress, be it the elaboration of an international convention against transnational organized crime, including a protocol to combat illicit manufacturing of and trafficking

in firearms, or other government efforts at the regional, subregional and national levels.

In deciding the objective and exact scope of an international conference on small arms, the experience of government initiatives should be taken into account, *inter alia*, to ensure that the international conference be supportive of ongoing initiatives and will spur on other necessary efforts.

Mr. Karem (Egypt): Following its abstention in 1995, Egypt voted last year as well as this in favour of the draft resolution on small arms. This testifies to Egypt's steadfast commitment to the pursuit of all efforts which can lead us to a safer world.

While Egypt is encouraged by the work undertaken by the Group of Governmental Experts, in which we participate, and by the recommendations contained in the Group's report, it will nevertheless continue to closely monitor the issue of small arms in order to ensure that it is dealt with in a just, balanced, non-discriminatory and comprehensive manner. It is Egypt's ardent hope that the issue of small arms will not go down the dead-end road of the transparency-in-armaments issue, which itself is being addressed in a highly selective manner.

The priorities in the field of disarmament remain the same. Nuclear weapons must be eliminated on a priority basis; efforts at non-proliferation, while necessary, do not replace concrete and irreversible disarmament measures. Other weapons of mass destruction must also be eliminated comprehensively. Conventional weapons must indeed be dealt with, but never in a selective manner. Micro-disarmament should never overshadow or downplay the cardinal importance allocated to macro-disarmament. Small arms do not exist only in conflict-ridden countries of the developing world and controlling the transfer of such arms should not be viewed as an opportunity to curb the Charter-based right of all countries, including developing countries, to acquire the means of their legitimate self-defence.

Furthermore, "small arms" does not necessarily mean "primitive arms" or "simple arms". There exist today small arms which are highly advanced and lethal and which must also be seen as falling within the purview of the small-arms issue. May I explain: New and advanced technologies have reduced lethality in size — miniaturized destruction. Should these new types of weapon be included and accorded the necessary attention? I dare say they should.

The new outlook with which we view the issue of small arms does not, however, prevent us from posing this pertinent question: What is the final objective that we seem to seek here by virtue of this draft resolution? Is it an international conference to be convened not later than 2001, as operative paragraph 1 states? In attempting to address this question, a number of salient facts rally one upon another, as follows.

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons cannot be portrayed as being the cause of conflict; rather, it may be seen as a possible catalyst for exacerbating already existing or underlying conflicts, which find their roots in a number of accumulated and complex political, socio-economic or ethnic factors, which in turn give rise to political upheaval and, consequently, military struggle. Unresolved political conflicts instigate these circumstances.

Small arms and light weapons, despite their use in various conflicts, cannot result in the carrying out of aggression or the occupation of territories, nor can they initiate sudden and surprising military action. Small arms are not weapons of large-scale offensive capabilities.

In certain regions, threat emanates not from small arms and light weapons, but from weapons of mass destruction with destabilizing consequences.

All States enjoy an inherent right to self-defence, to defend their sovereignty and territorial integrity, and to protect their national security.

The right of peoples under colonial or foreign occupation to realize their right to self-determination must be supported.

It is important to underscore the need to uphold a State's authority of control and to adopt legislation to curb the proliferation of small arms and light weapons through illicit transfer, especially when criminal acts are destined to lead to terrorism and/or drug trafficking.

These facts notwithstanding, the need to clearly state our priorities in the field of disarmament should be properly addressed because of their pertinence to the whole issue of small arms in order to prevent the role of small arms and light weapons in conflicts from being overshadowed and to keep their potentials within the proper proportions and well-defined parameters.

Before concluding, I should like to pay tribute in this connection to the excellent and steadfast role played by Japan in this regard, and particularly to the role played by the Chairman of the Group of Experts, Ambassador Mitsuro Donowaki, for his endless and tireless efforts in this connection.

Mr. Benítez Verson (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): First of all, I wish to commend the efforts of the sponsors of draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.13/Rev.1. In particular, I wish to commend the delegation of Japan for having shown the necessary flexibility to accommodate the basic concerns about the draft resolution that was originally presented.

Cuba shares the concerns that many delegations have expressed regarding the problems arising from the illicit trade in weapons, particularly in those countries that must face them without resources. For Cuba, the idea of convening an international conference to consider the problem of the illicit arms trade in all its aspects is useful. However, it is also of paramount importance that the conference take place only after a clear understanding has been reached regarding its objectives, scope and agenda. That is why, both in the preparatory process and during the conference itself, the basic principles of transparency and scope must prevail so that the opinions of all interested States are taken into account.

My country views with concern a certain tendency towards a disorderly proliferation of studies on the item before us, which deplete the meagre resources available to the United Nations. My country is not opposed to studies when States consider them to be truly necessary, but the greatest efficiency should be sought in organizing such studies and the optimal use should be made of time in order to assess their results.

Finally, we voted in favour of the fourth preambular paragraph of the draft resolution because we consider it very important that there be an explicit reference to the right of self-determination of all States and peoples in the context of such a sensitive issue as that addressed in the draft resolution.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): If no other delegation wishes to speak, the Committee will now take up draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.20/Rev.1, entitled "Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects".

The sponsors have expressed the wish that the draft resolution be adopted by the Committee without a vote. If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Committee wishes to act accordingly.

I call on the Secretary of the Committee.

Mr. Lin Kuo-Chung (Secretary of the Committee): Draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.20/Rev.1, entitled "Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects", was introduced by the representative of Sweden at the 17th meeting, on 28 October 1998. In this connection, a note by the Secretariat concerning the responsibilities entrusted to the Secretary-General under the draft resolution is contained in document A/C.1/53/L.59.

The sponsors are listed in the draft resolution and in document A/C.1/53/INF.2. The following country has also become a sponsor of the draft resolution: Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): As no representatives wish to explain their position before the decision, I take it that the draft resolution is adopted.

Draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.20/Rev.1 was adopted.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I now call upon those representatives who wish to explain their position on the decision that has just been taken.

Mr. Benítez Verson (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Cuba supported the draft resolution because we believe it is very important that this Committee give a clear political signal regarding the importance it attaches to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and particularly to Amended Protocol II on the use of mines, booby traps and other devices. We believe that the additional Protocol is potentially the most effective legal instrument that the international community can use to resolve the humanitarian problems caused by the indiscriminate, irresponsible use of anti-personnel mines. Our authorities are considering the possibility of Cuba's acceding to the Amended Protocol II, regarding restrictions on the use of mines, booby traps and other devices.

Mr. Becher (Israel): Israel joined the consensus on this draft resolution. Israel ratified the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) in March 1995, participated

in the Review Conference which amended Protocol II of the Convention and is presently in the process of ratifying the Amended Protocol II on landmines and the new Protocol on Blinding Laser Weapons.

Israel supports the efforts to extend accession to the Conventional Weapons Convention to as many States as possible, particularly in the Middle East region. Israel's policy stems from its desire to reduce and prevent human suffering and to restrict the use of weapons that have indiscriminate effects. However, we feel that it is necessary to maintain a balance between vital humanitarian concerns, on the one hand, and legitimate security concerns, on the other. Joint action by the international community to prevent suffering from the indiscriminate use of mines will in itself contribute to mutual trust and confidence. In this context, Israel reiterates its call on all States in the region to accede to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons as a regional confidence-building step towards enhancing the security of the entire area.

The Chairman: As no other delegations wish to explain their position on the decision regarding draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.20/Rev.1, the Committee will now proceed to take action on draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.7/Rev.2, entitled "Assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and collecting them".

It is the wish of the sponsors that the draft resolution be adopted without a vote. If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Committee wishes to act accordingly.

I call on the Secretary of the Committee.

Mr. Lin Kuo-Chung (Secretary of the Committee): Draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.7/Rev.2, entitled "Assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and collecting them", was introduced by the representative of Mali at this meeting. The sponsors are listed in the draft resolution and in document A/C.1/53/INF.2 and Add.1 and Add.2. The following countries have also become sponsors: Belgium and Mozambique.

I remind the Committee that in the last line of the last preambular paragraph "Oslo" is now followed by the words "common understanding".

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): There having been no objection to the sponsors' wish that the draft resolution be adopted without a vote, I take it that it is adopted.

Draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.7/Rev.2 was adopted.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): We have completed today's agenda.

Before adjourning the meeting, I would renew my appeal to delegations to notify the secretariat of those draft resolutions which they feel are ready for action to be taken upon them. Essentially, I am asking that they reconsider requested postponements and see whether they are still necessary, so that we may be able to produce a fourth informal paper announcing which draft resolutions will be acted upon on Monday afternoon.

Mr. Karem (Egypt): In order to accommodate the different concerns of many interested delegations, the draft resolution currently under agenda item 74, "The risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East", contained in document A/C.1/53/L.21, has been subject to intensive consultations, which led to the submission of document A/C.1/53/L.21/Rev.2, which has been presented today. Therefore, the document for decision under this item will be document A/C.1/53/L.21/Rev.2. I hope that this draft resolution will enjoy overwhelming support, as has always been the case with similar draft resolutions in the past.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.